

Stormwater is water from rain or melting snow that does not soak into the ground. It flows from rooftops, over paved areas, bare soil, and sloped lawns. As it flows, stormwater runoff collects and transports animal waste, litter, salt, pesticides, fertilizers, oil & grease, soil and other potential pollutants

### **Why is this an issue?**

Rain and snowmelt wash pollutants from streets, construction sites, and land into storm sewers and ditches. Eventually, these empty the polluted stormwater directly into streams and rivers with no treatment. This is known as stormwater pollution.

Polluted stormwater degrades our lakes, rivers, wetlands and other waterways such as our beautiful Northport Harbor! Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen can cause the overgrowth of algae resulting in oxygen depletion in waterways. Toxic substances from motor vehicles and careless application of pesticides and fertilizers threaten water quality and can kill fish and other aquatic life. Bacteria from animal wastes and improper connections to storm sewer systems can make lakes and waterways unsafe for wading, swimming and fish consumption. Eroded soil is a pollutant as well. It clouds the waterway and interferes with the habitat of fish and plant life.

A sanitary sewer system and a storm sewer system are not the same. Water that goes down a sink or other inside drain flows to either a wastewater treatment plant or to a septic system for treatment. Storm sewer flows are not treated. Water that flows down driveways, streets, and outside areas into a storm sewer or ditch flows directly to nearby creeks, fish and wildlife habitats, downstream recreational areas, and drinking water supplies.

How can YOU, an average person, help out?

#### **1. Remember: Only rain belongs in the drain!**

Don't dump anything down storm drains. Be sure to clear away leaves and debris.

## 2. Wash your car over your lawn or gravel.

This allows the ground to neutralize the soap and grime from your car rather than sending it directly to our creeks and streams. Use biodegradable or non-toxic soap that is phosphate-free. You can also take your car to a commercial car wash where wastewater is either recycled or treated.

## 3. Keep your car well-maintained.

Fix any fluid leaks promptly and make sure to clean up any spills. If you perform your own automotive maintenance, automotive repair shops will accept 5 gallons of used motor oil per resident per day.

## 4. Consider disconnecting your downspouts.

You can plant a rain garden to absorb stormwater runoff. You can also use a rain barrel to help collect runoff from your roof and gutters to be used on your lawn and garden.

## 5. Use lawn or garden chemicals sparingly.

Choose organic alternatives when possible and check the weather forecast to avoid applying them before a storm.

## 6. Mow your lawn less often.

Try to keep your lawn at least 3" in height to minimize weed growth, reduce the need for watering, and decrease the likelihood of pests. Leaving the clippings on the lawn can also help block weeds and retain moisture. Sweep your sidewalks and driveway rather than hosing them down.

## 7. Plant native, low maintenance plants and grasses.

They often have longer root systems, which reduce the amount of chemicals and water needed. Try seeding your lawn with Buffalo Grass or Northern Dropseed

For native plant

listings, try <http://www.wildflower.org/plants> or <http://plants.usda.gov/java>.

## 8. Minimize runoff by not over-watering your lawn and garden.

Keep sprinklers on a timer to avoid pooling water.

## **9. Clean up pet waste.**

Bag up pet waste and dispose of it in the trash to prevent harmful bacteria from washing into local waterways.

## **10. Be sure to minimize the amount of ice-melt used.**

Do not over-apply salt. Choose a more environmentally-friendly alternative when possible.

## **11. Consider minimizing impervious surfaces around your home.**

Use bricks, gravel, cobbles, natural stone, or permeable pavers instead of asphalt or concrete when possible.

## **12. Make sure storm drain outfalls are not running in dry weather.**

A storm sewer system is designed to carry stormwater. If it hasn't rained in 72 hours, it should not be flowing. Call your municipal stormwater contact

## **13. Do not drain your pool, spa, or fountain to a storm drain.**

Allow chlorine to dissipate for several days. Test the water to ensure the residual chlorine is zero before slowly draining to a landscaped area. You may be able to drain to a sanitary sewer. Contact your local municipality for more information.

## **14. Keep your septic system well-maintained to prevent leaks.**

A leaking septic system can leach harmful bacteria into storm sewer systems and local waterways. It is important to keep your system well-maintained to prevent costly repairs as well.

## **15. Walk, bike, or share a ride when possible.**

Driving causes particulates to enter our air. This air pollution can contaminate our rain and end up in our streams and lakes.

## **16. Properly maintain your neighborhood stormwater pond.**

It is designed to capture and treat stormwater runoff.

## **17. Install a rain barrel or cistern to capture roof runoff.**

This helps prevent stormwater from reaching waterways and reduces the potential for pollution. There are several environmental benefits associated with

rain barrels. By using harvested rainwater for watering lawns, gardens, potted plants and for washing off patio furniture and tools, rain barrels conserve water. From a gardening perspective, the natural nutrients in rain water make it far better than tap water, which has chlorine and fluoride in it. With a rain barrel, gardeners can minimize or eliminate their use of chemical fertilizers.

### Potential Youth Education programs/activities

<https://www.watershedcouncil.org/stormwater-for-kids.html>

### What are some stormwater management practices?

The following are some practices available for managing stormwater:

- Vegetative practices - naturally vegetated filter strips, grassed swales, constructed wetlands, tree plantings.
- Structural practices - concrete grid and modular pavement, diversions, extended detention, retention and infiltration basins, porous pavement, water quality inlets (oil/grit separators).
- Maintenance practices - fertilizer and pesticide application control, litter and leaf control, vehicle maintenance, street cleaning.

### What are some benefits of a stormwater management program?

Flood protection - proper stormwater management practices retain runoff on the site and release it slowly, preventing flood damage on and off-site.

Groundwater recharge - increases movement of water into the ground to recharge the water table.

Erosion and sediment control - reduces the volume of stormwater runoff from the site, keeping soil on the land and out of the storm sewers, streets and waterbodies.

Water quality protection - prevents runoff carrying pollutants from washing off land and running into streams, lakes, and coastal waters. This protects drinking water, recreation and wildlife habitat.

Infrastructure protection - stormwater management practices keep sediment out of highway ditches, culverts and waterways, reducing the costs for maintenance, dredging and replacement of public facilities.

## Public Participation/Involvement:

Providing opportunities for citizens to participate in the program development and implementation, including effectively publicizing public hearings and/or encouraging citizen representatives on a storm water management panel.

Example: Northport “Clean the Bay Day”.

## Other Stormwater Prevention Resources

<https://www.epa.gov/npdes/npdes-stormwater-program>

<https://www.cwp.org/reducing-stormwater-runoff/#:~:text=Stormwater%20runoff%20is%20rainfall%20that,stream%20impairment%20in%20urban%20areas.>

## “Why should I care” stories

<https://www.pressconnects.com/story/news/local/2021/05/14/ben-weitsman-son-lawsuit-ny-sierra-club-environmental-violations-stormwater/5090402001/>

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/raw-sewage-toxins-pollution-waterways/>